

## **Issues Addressed In Coastal Migratory Pelagics Framework Amendment 2 May 16, 2014**

**Background:** The South Atlantic Council is interested in ways to reduce the complexity of the current commercial trip limit system for Atlantic group Spanish mackerel in Florida waters and to maintain trip limits to meet management goals for the fishery, and had placed the action in South Atlantic Framework Action 2013. In June 2013 the Council approved a motion to move the action to a future amendment after the Spanish mackerel stock assessment was complete, and in March 2014 the Council directed staff to place the action in Framework Amendment 2.

A trip limit system for Florida waters including unlimited week days, in-season reductions in trip limits, and an adjusted quota for Atlantic migratory group Spanish mackerel was implemented through Amendment 6 in 1992. The adjustment (250,000 lbs below the specific commercial ACL) was calculated based on the number of vessels and the catch rates at that time, and was intended to allow fishing by small vessels at 500 lbs for the rest of the year. However, both the number of vessels and the catch rates have changes in the past 20 years and may have reduced the effectiveness and necessity of the 250,000-lb adjustment.

When the current trip limit system for Florida waters was put in place the total allowable catch (TAC) for commercial harvest of Atlantic Spanish mackerel was 3.87 million pounds (mp). The current commercial annual catch limit (ACL) set in Amendment 18 is 3.13 mp, and the Council has proposed a commercial ACL of 3.33 mp in Framework Amendment 1. Both the current and proposed commercial ACLs are lower than the TAC that was in place when the trip limit system was implemented.

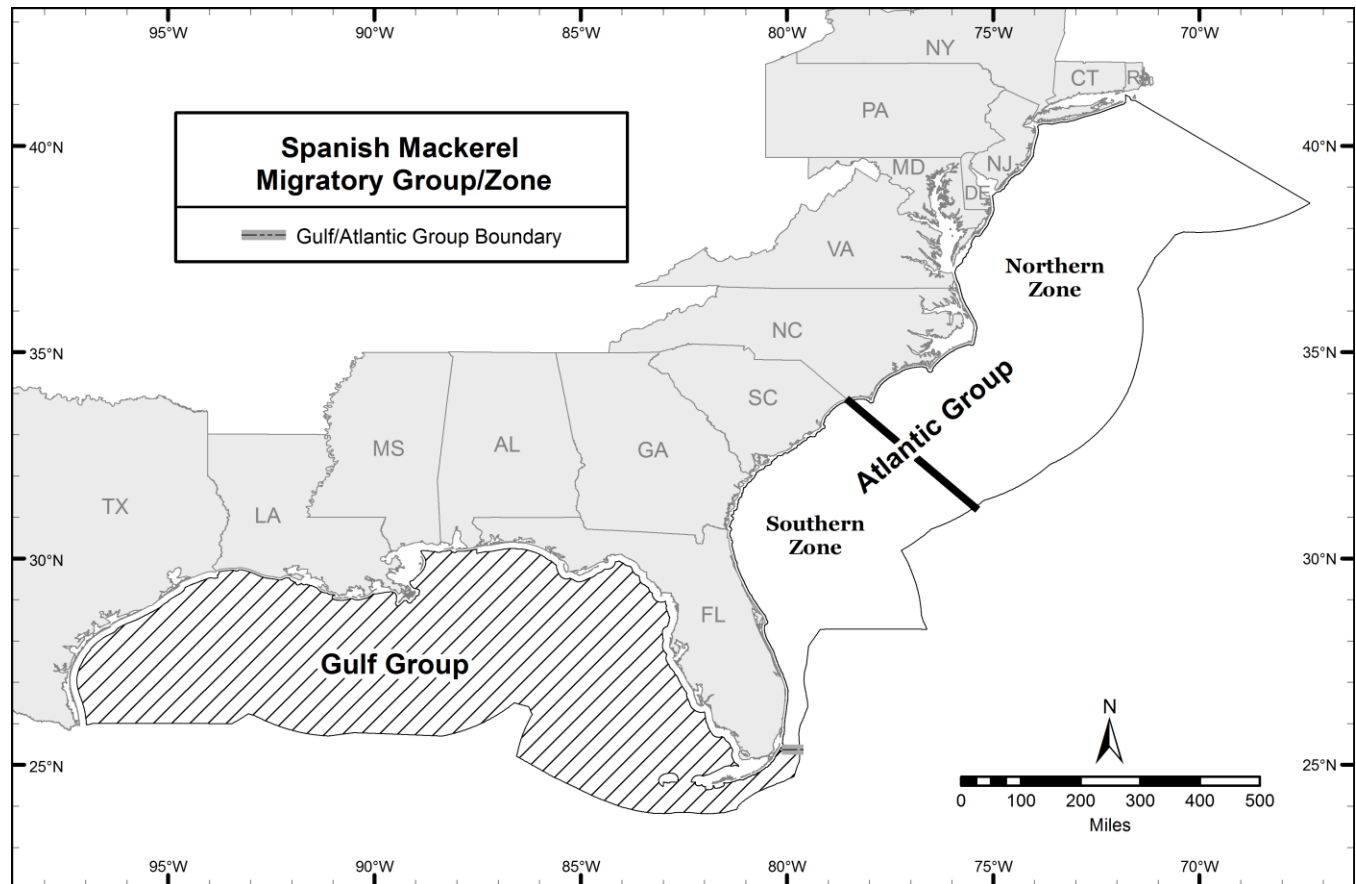
The allowance of unlimited catch in Florida waters on weekdays beginning December 1 may contribute to early closures in the spring under the lower commercial ACL. On the other hand, the trip limit reduction may help lengthen the open season, and may be retained but based on the full quota rather than the adjusted quota.

The system of trip limit reductions described above applies only to federal waters off Florida. If Amendment 20B is implemented, Northern and Southern Zones would be created for Atlantic migratory group Spanish mackerel. The Southern Zone would include Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina. Therefore, if any part of the current system of trip limit reductions for waters off Florida is retained, the Southern Zone will have different trip limits in different areas.

<b>Atlantic Spanish Mackerel</b>	<b>Total ACL</b>	<b>Commercial ACL</b>
<b>Until 2011/12</b>	7.04 MP	3.87 MP
<b>2011/12 thru 2013/14</b>	5.69 MP	3.13 MP
<b>Proposed 2014-2016</b>	6.063 MP	3.33 MP

<b>Proposed 20B Zones</b>	<b>Northern Zone Quota</b>	<b>Southern Zone Quota</b>
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<b>Proposed Comm ACL 2014-2016 = 6.063 MP</b>	662,670 lbs	2,667,330 lbs
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**Figure 1.** Fixed boundary between Atlantic and Gulf migratory groups of Spanish mackerel, with the proposed Northern and Southern Zones in the Atlantic Group (pending submission and approval of CMP Amendment 20B).

The map above illustrates what the proposed northern and southern zones would look like if Amendment 20B is implemented. If there continues to be a separate trip limit for waters off FL with a separate system of trip limit step-downs, there would be a sub-zone within the proposed southern zone that has different regulations than the rest of the southern zone. The Council may consider applying the preferred trip limit to the entire proposed southern zone to simplify the regulatory environment in that area.

### **Expected Schedule**

June 2014 – South Atlantic Council review and select Preferred Alternative

September 2014 – Public hearing; South Atlantic Council approves for Secretarial Review

October 2014 - Gulf Council approves for Secretarial Review (if necessary, depends on implementation of Amendment 20B)

Early 2015 - Implementation